25X1 Approved For Release 2008/10/14 : CIA-RDP80R01720R000700030012-5

22 December 1971

NSC review completed

MEMORANDUM

25X1 SUBJECT: [redacted] Message [redacted] 25X1
21 December 1971

25X1 REFERENCES: A. [redacted] Message [redacted] 25X1
17 December 1971

B. CAS Saigon Message [redacted] 25X1
18 December 1971

Please pass to Ambassador Bunker (if possible before his departure) the following joint NSC/State/Defense/Agency message:

"1. Appreciate your comments and analysis Ref B. Basic question to be faced appears to be availability [redacted] for immediate release. We accept your plan for moving [redacted] to another facility in Saigon to rewaken interest of other side. In discussing this move with Thieu, however, we hope his agreement can be secured at same time to the concept of [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1
25X1 exchange for [redacted] other prisoners, as outlined in the scenario given in para 6 of Ref A. We see nothing to be gained by delaying approach to Thieu on this question and recommend it be made ASAP by Ambassador Bunker.

"2. We propose you inform Thieu that we agree with his view as conveyed by Col. Binh (per your message of Oct. 28) that a prisoner swap should be an 'appropriate one' resulting in positive gain for US/GVN side. You should tell him that, as he knows, USG attaches great importance to earliest possible release of any and all of our
25X1 prisoners in enemy hands. This question has continued to grow in importance in US, and we would consider release of [redacted] a prisoner for almost five years, plus the release of a small additional number of US/GVN prisoners as good value in return [redacted] 25X1

DPMO review(s) State Dept. review completed [redacted] 25X1

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"3. You could further note that USG has been under heavy Congressional and public pressure in recent period on prisoner releases, with specific focus on our alleged refusal to release the two men whose names were brought out by Sgt. Sexton. We have managed to stave off this pressure to some degree, but the growing concern on this subject is reflected in a news report Dec. 21 in which two Congressmen (Reps. Nedzi and O'Hara of Mich.) charge that USG is 'passing up opportunities' to free US prisoners by exchanging them for Communist prisoners. (Text being sent by separate State telegram.) Senior members of Senate and House Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees have registered similar concern. Under these circumstances, we consider it urgent and essential to do all in our power to bring this exchange possibility to an early positive conclusion. We hope Thieu will sympathize with this view and will agree that this opening should be pursued actively by making clear to other side that both [redacted] can be released in exchange for US/GVN prisoners.

"4. You could explain to Thieu the two helicopter operation, outlined in para six of Ref A, to make clear we are aware of need to guard against tricks by other side. Two helicopter formula would help signal to Communist side that we will expect good value for release [redacted] in form of a number of US/GVN prisoners.

"5. In view of long passage of time since Sexton release, we hope that Thieu's concurrence [redacted] can be obtained quickly, and that further actions will be taken without delay. We suggest [redacted] new Saigon facility at once and that new ads be run in Saigon papers within a few days, without waiting until Jan. 17. If call is received, we recommend you follow scenario set forth para six of Ref A.

"6. We agree with point in para one of Ref B that there may be difficulty in getting other side to provide precise information on names, nationalities, and numbers of prisoners they would release [redacted] As stated in Ref A, we do not repeat not want this question to become a sticking point. Purpose of this exercise is to secure release of US and GVN prisoners, as many as possible. Questions of names, numbers, and nationality are secondary to this purpose, and we do not want to let them stand in the way of an actual release/exchange."

25X1 SECRET/[redacted]

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